

LYNCHBURG CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Item Summary

MEETING DATE: **September 26, 2006, Work Session**

AGENDA ITEM NO.: 2

CONSENT:

REGULAR: **X**

CLOSED SESSION:

(Confidential)

ACTION: **X**

INFORMATION:

ITEM TITLE: **Presentation of Museum System Study and Recommendations**

RECOMMENDATION: Accept the findings of the study and allow staff to develop action plans to implement the findings.

SUMMARY: The Museum System preserves the history of the City, with some 20,000 artifacts, 8,000 images, and the stewardship of several historic structures. For the Museum System to move to the next level of community service, tourism and economic development, and educational benefit, the following steps need to be taken:

1. Acquire a facility for exhibits and storage in downtown that will enhance our ability to draw visitors and serve citizens;
2. Create one board to advise the City and oversee the Museum System and all its projects and properties; at present, there are six entities involved with the Museum and Point of Honor.
3. Review and revise the 30 year old contract with Wachovia Bank/Diggs Trust regarding the management of Point of Honor;
4. Undertake long range, strategic planning for the Museum System beginning with the development of a five year plan.

Council was advised during the reconstruction of the Historic Courthouse that there were other issues regarding the operation of an effective museum system that needed to be addressed. Toward that end, museum system experts Dan Murphy, of PRD Group, Ltd., and Mary Ellen Stumpf, of Stumpf & Associates, Inc., were retained to examine the present system and make recommendations on improvements. They interviewed a number of stakeholders, toured museum and other City facilities, met with senior staff and made a number of recommendations included in the attached report.

PRIOR ACTION(S): Council was briefed on the current status of the Museum System and approved the Museum System Study on February 28, 2006.

FISCAL IMPACT: Actual costs are to be determined. There is funding in the current CIP budget for Museum System facility expansion.

CONTACT(S): Doug Harvey, Museum Director 455-4422

ATTACHMENT(S): "Report of Assessment and Recommendations for the Lynchburg Museum System"

REVIEWED BY: lkp

REPORT OF ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lynchburg Museum System

Lynchburg, Virginia

Presented By:

Dan Murphy, PRD Group, Ltd.

Mary Ellen Stumpf, Stumpf & Associates, Inc.

July, 2006

ASSESSMENT: PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The Museum System serves the communities of Lynchburg and surrounding areas in three primary ways: stewardship, education, and tourism. To best define how these objectives can be fulfilled in the future, an objective assessment was conducted to evaluate current conditions, to identify primary goals, and devise strategic actions for immediate and long-term measurable outcomes. The assessment was conducted by a renowned team of museum consultants in planning, management, governance, exhibits, collections, program development, and fund development. The consultants were Dan Murphy of The PRD Group, Ltd., and Mary Ellen Stumpf of Stumpf & Associates, Inc.

The consultants, in coordination with key leaders, designed the study in a highly participatory manner. Data was collected as follows:

- A thorough review of the Museum System's history, sites, collections, exhibits and plans, programs, services, human resources, finances and impact.
- A series of interviews and focus groups with "stakeholders" representing a range of leaders, constituents, participants, partners and perspectives on the optimum role of the Museum System in the cultural landscape of Lynchburg and the region.
- Surveys were sent to every private participant with some level of responsibility or authority: Lynchburg Museum Foundation and POH, Inc; Museum Advisory Board, POH Board of Managers, POH Collections Committee, all volunteers, etc.
- The list of the identified community participants in this study is attached as **Appendix A**. Some survey participants preferred anonymity.
- The consultants also utilized best practices in the museum industry and strategies gleaned from other similar environments. We express our appreciation to all participants and to the City of Lynchburg for the opportunity to guide the future of this resource.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Participants represented related museum constituencies: cultural, educational, economic, professional, civic and governmental. They offered a full range of affiliation with the life and institutions of the region. Interviews, group discussions and survey analysis resulted in key points of consensus:

- Those interviewed desire a higher vision and purpose for the Museum, primarily focused on serving well greater numbers of people; and, supporting the City's plans for cultural, educational and economic development.
- The re-introduction of the Museum is seen as an opportunity to start and/or refresh programming and marketing partnerships among the key cultural arts organizations (Amazement Square, Riverviews, possibly the Academy of Fine Arts, local colleges and universities, Lynch's Landing, Lynchburg Historical Foundation, et al)
- The collection is seen as the Museum's greatest asset; efforts should be made to increase meaningful public access to the collection.
- In general, participants individually, and as groups, questioned the current situation in terms of impact, numbers served, product and services.
- They felt there is a lack of clarity on role of boards and other groups.
- There is confusion about the origins and evolution of the Museum and Point of Honor and concern about the complexity and effectiveness of the current operations.
- The Museum can best integrate with and support local tourism promotion by serving as the "hub" for regional heritage tourism, providing context, orientation, and tour materials that link the individual sites to a larger understanding of the region.
- Participants provided a wide range of solutions and strategies for developing a clear focus, enhanced facilities and services, and impact. Participants were outspoken in terms of what the purpose should be; who are target audiences; how should exhibits and programs be developed and managed; potential partnerships; potential funding strategies, etc.
- The Court House is seen as a central element of community heritage which should be accessible to the public, including for special events, yet many acknowledged that it has serious limitations as a public facility: restricted accessibility, a perception of inadequate parking, lack of supporting amenities, and distance from the downtown retail and cultural district.
- The Riverfront will increasingly function as **the** cultural destination for Lynchburg and the focus of event planning. If the Museum remains in the Court House, the public will need to be educated that the Court House is actually part of downtown. A shuttle

bus service may be needed to support tourist visitation. If there is a new museum facility, many felt it should be in the Riverfront district where it will add to the development mix and draw heritage tourists. It would be ideal if this riverfront facility could help tell the story of the riverfront in the social, economic, transportation, and technological development of Lynchburg.

- Many questioned the concept of a museum system in favor of promoting the Lynchburg Museum
- Effective marketing is perceived as essential to the Museums' success.

STATEMENT OF GOALS

The study concludes that the Museum can enhance its vital role in the Lynchburg community, particularly in areas of education, tourism, and preservation-based economic development, by implementation of these key goals.

GOAL ONE: Implement the Vision -- Create Exhibits and Programs to Serve the Community, Region, and Tourist Audiences as the Primary Destination for Telling, Sharing, and Understanding the Story of Lynchburg, the Region, and its People.

Strategic Actions:

1. Define the facility and exhibit plan that best supports:
 - Stewardship of, and meaningful access to, the community's collection of historic objects, documents, photographs, and records – See ***Appendix B: Facility Options***
 - Ongoing Special Exhibitions program
 - Accessibility (barrier-free entry and adequate parking are priorities)
 - Synergy with other developing community resources
2. Define steps to focus and develop Point of Honor to optimum role in community; define/update interpretive, staffing, and program plans for Point of Honor.
3. Coordinate with tourism and economic development initiatives to establish the Museum and the region's heritage "hub" linking other historic and cultural sites.

4. Establish partnerships and joint programming with other educational/cultural entities, especially with other City-funded heritage sites.
5. Improve and expand Museum website and distance learning programs.

GOAL TWO: Structure and organize for success by consolidating museum leadership and ensuring a stronger financial future.

Immediate Strategic Actions:

1. Review and clarify role and activities of any future advisory groups – suggest only an ongoing Educators Advisory Council and temporary/ad hoc advisory groups for specific exhibits or programs as needed.
2. Revisit and clarify your relationship with the City and the Diggs Trust. Review 30-year old agreements and reaffirm the original, simple intention of having a museum on the history and life of Lynchburg. Review the necessity and meaning of having two 501c3 foundations—recommend only the Museum of Lynchburg Foundation.
3. Establish one board with clear roles and responsibilities under City authority:
 - Organize board activity around key working committees: Executive Committee, Program Committee (overseeing mission and content), Finance Committee, Development and Membership Committee are sufficient.
 - Enable this board to oversee the Museum's planning, vitality, and financial development. By charter or operating agreement, affirm checks and balances and City authority through reasonable guidelines and board appointments,

Strategic Actions 2006-07:

1. Use accreditation criteria provided by the American Association of Museums to guide all activity forward. Criteria are helpful and museum accreditation should be an objective for this entity.
2. Develop a five-year plan through 2012 to include:
 - The vision of becoming a primary cultural resource and destination, with specific, measurable objectives.
 - Well-defined target audiences, their needs and interests, with strategies for developing and expanding those audiences.

- Priorities for program: exhibits, collections, partnerships/collaborations and services.
 - A staffing and operations plan including one cohesive volunteer program.
3. Forecast the financial resources required, the sources and strategies for earned and philanthropic support, as well as endowment for the future. Financial support is your greatest untapped potential and your most significant challenge. Develop a long-term fund development plan, including earned income, fundraising and grants programs to supplement public support.
 4. Establish and sustain an effective communications and marketing program in support of the plan.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS

Karen Buchanan
President, Point of Honor, Inc. Vice President, Wachovia Bank Trust

Lynn Dodge
Director of Libraries and Museums, City of Lynchburg

Stevie Dovel
Museum Advisory Board

Becky Giles
Point of Honor Board of Managers

Tom Ledford
former Director, Lynchburg Museum System

Beckie Nix
Manager, Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center

Florence Perrow
Volunteer Program Chair

Terri Proffitt
Director, Lynch's Landing, Inc

Kim Payne
Lynchburg City Manager

Mort Sajadian
Director, Amazement Square

Scott Smith
Advisory Board

Bonnie Svrcek
Assistant City Manager

Elaine Watson
Museum Foundation Board

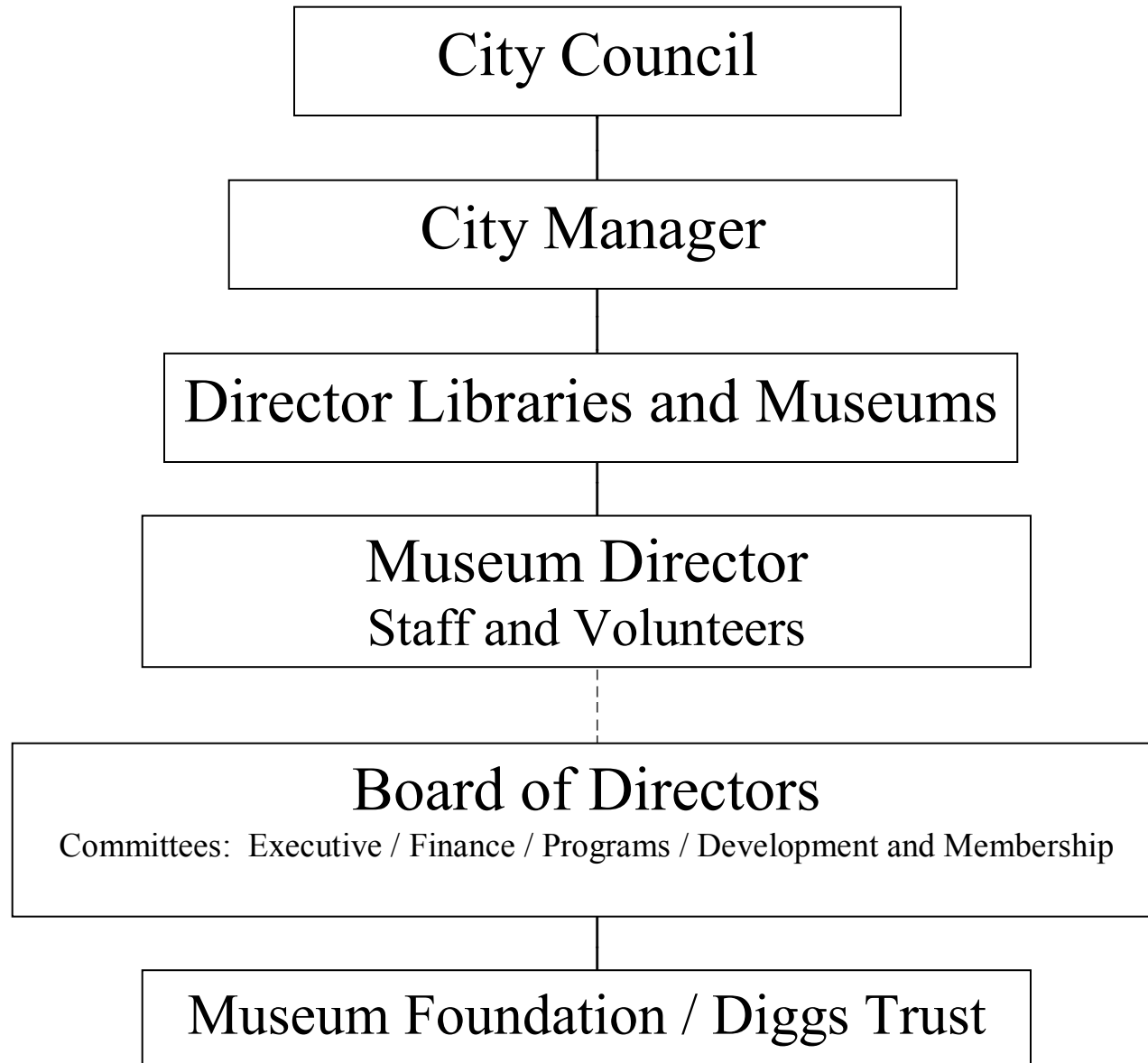
Mina Wood
Past President, Point of Honor Board of Managers

In addition, surveys went anonymously to all members of the boards, committees, and all volunteers with a strong return.

Museum Advisory Board Meeting Participants:

Laura Crumbley, Stevie Dovel, Bob Gardner, Dabney Jackson, Laura Munson, Randy Nexsen, Florence Perrow, Marc Schewel, Elaine Watson, and Nicholle Gilkeson, City Planner

Lynchburg Museum System





APPENDIX B

LYNCHBURG MUSEUM SYSTEM

June 19, 2006

OPTIONS FOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Option 1: Court House only

Court House: Lynchburg history exhibits on main floor (Court Room & galleries)
Cases in stairwell for rotating collections display.
Temporary gallery on third floor

Notes: PRO: Consistent with expectations of some members of the community
Little additional resources or funds required
Can be operated with existing or slightly enhanced staff levels

CON: Status quo approach limits enhanced impact
Putting all museum functions in CH leaves no space for programs or flexibility
Very limited (or no) public access to library or collections
Existing off-site collections storage must be maintained / should be upgraded
Unsolved accessibility, parking issues
Lack of other synergistic amenities (restaurants, shopping, attractions)

Option 2: Court House as system “hub” / 56 Ninth Street added as “River Center”

Court House: Lynchburg area overview / historic sites “hub” exhibits in court room
Leave adequate space in court room to enable special function use
Changing object display cases in stairwell
Rear rooms on main floor to be used for research / reading room as floor loading permits
Third floor gallery used for collection / archival storage as floor loading permits

River Center: Exhibit about Lynchburg as a river town / regional center
Temporary exhibit gallery
Collections storage
Museum store
Classroom and office space

Notes: PRO: Broadens museum footprint, increases potential audience
Enables earned income through museum store, special event ticketing
Supports programming collaborations with other institutions
Affirms and enhances riverfront as cultural center of community
Many synergistic visitor amenities are nearby

CON: Requires additional staff
Capital investment in purchase and re-habilitation
Creation of code-mandated rear access involves other property owners

Option 3: Relocate Entire Museum to River Center

Court House: Returns to city for meetings, ceremonies, or a stand-alone city function

River Center: As above but with theme broadened to the whole story of Lynchburg region

Notes: PRO: Costs for River Center are the same, net gain to City for re-purposing of CH
Provides most complete and efficient facility under one roof
Many synergistic visitor amenities are nearby

CON: Goes against existing expectations

Option 4: Court House and “Heritage Center” in East Sector of Methodist Church (Police remain in place)

Court House: Install Lynchburg history exhibits on main floor (Court Room & galleries)
Cases in stairwell for rotating collections display.
Third floor gallery used for collection / archival storage as floor loading permits

Church: Central area of sanctuary to be used as public auditorium / program space
Street-front sector of sanctuary converted to temporary exhibit gallery
Fellowship Hall with two-story infill structure (reading room & archives on first level, collections storage on second level)
Office/support/storage in remaining spaces as code allows

Notes: PRO: Consolidates upper anchor to Ninth Street historic spine
Increase of “critical mass” on Court Street will encourage visitation
Uses city-owned building to high public purpose
Proximity of two buildings has staff and operational efficiency.

CON: Moderate to high capital costs for renovation and infill construction
Moderate to high building operation costs (heating/cooling the sanctuary)
Church architecture dominates renovation / compromises functionality
Unsolved accessibility, parking issues
Lack of other synergistic amenities (restaurants, shopping, attractions)

Option 5: Court House as “Heritage Center,” Methodist Church as Museum

Court House: Court room as function space / reading room
Archives / Library in rear rooms of main floor as floor loading permits
Cases in stairwell for rotating collections display
Entire third floor gallery used for collection / archival storage as floor loading permits

Church: Central area of sanctuary to be used as public auditorium / program space
Street-front sector of sanctuary converted to temporary exhibit gallery
Fellowship Hall as primary exhibit space
Collections storage in west sector
Program, office, support spaces as layout allows

Notes: PRO: As per Option 4, but more so
Provides range of community resource



Minimizes intrusions on historic fabric of Court House
Maximizes return to City on investment in Church rehabilitation
CON: As per Option 4, but more so

Option 6: Relocate entire Museum to Methodist Church

Court House: Returns to city for meetings, ceremonies, or a stand-alone city function

Church: Central area of sanctuary to be used as public auditorium / program space
Street-front sector of sanctuary converted to temporary exhibit gallery
Fellowship Hall as primary exhibit space
Collections storage in west sector
Program, office, support spaces as layout allows

Notes: PRO: More efficient than any two-building option

CON: Takes Lynchburg's most prominent historic building out of Museum System
Church architecture dominates renovation / compromises functionality

OVERALL NOTE: In all options **Point of Honor** is considered a satellite facility to the Main Museum. It is recommended that Point of Honor staffing (currently seven days per week) be re-focused to targeted primary visitation hours, especially in coordination with special events.